

Florin Japanese-American Citizens League  
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

**MRS. HANA MATSUMOTO KODAMA**

September 21, 1989  
6815 Florin Perkins Road  
Sacramento, CA

By Mary Tsukamoto  
Florin Japanese-American Citizens League  
and Oral History Program  
California State University, Sacramento





# JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

FLORIN CHAPTER •

• SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95828

## PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin or have relatives and friends who have ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Many hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind; they were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their seventies, eighties and nineties. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jacqueline S. Reinier, Director of the Oral History Program at California State University, Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also want to acknowledge the project volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, and Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERVIEW HISTORY.....	i
BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY.....	ii
SESSION 1, April 28, 1991	
(Tape 1, Side A).....	1
Hana Matsumoto Kodama's background--Birthplace in Niigata, Japan--Left with grandmother to Hiroshima-- Separated family--Parents left for Hawaii--Settling in Florin--Difficult times doing domestic work or working on the farm--Choice over going to school--Debts and loss of farm--Cannery in Walnut Grove, California--Post World War II--San Francisco--Dressmaking--working for Japan Food Corporation--Husband had stroke--Difficult times--Help from sister Rose--Faith--Seven grandchildren.	
(Tape I, Side B).....	22
Only recreation; movies--Thanks and positive thinking-- God's love--Old friends--Aspiration for American schooling lost but seen in the children--Regret in not learning English to talk to the grandchildren.	
TABLE OF CHILDREN.....	30



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

### Interviewer

Mary Tsukamoto, Historian and Redress Activist, Florin Japanese-American Citizens League; Author of *We the People, A Story of Internment in America*, Laguna Publishers, 1987.

### Interview Time and Place

The interview took place on September 21, 1989, at Mary Tsukamoto's home at 6815 Florin Perkins Road, Sacramento, California.

### Transcribing and Translating

The interview was conducted in Japanese. Lily Umeda translated the tape into English. Douglas Sugimoto, a senior student at University of California at Berkeley, typed the text into format.

### Editing

The interviewer and interviewee's family (Florence Shikasho) edited the text. There were moderate updates and corrections made. The biographical summary was written by the family. The revised text was returned on February 15, 1994. Douglas Sugimoto, now attending Harvard Law School, consented to complete the manuscript. Communication was accomplished by telephone and mail.

### Photography

Pictures were reproduced by Dan Inouye, a member of the Florin Japanese-American Citizens League.

### Tapes and Interview Records

Copies of the bound transcript and the tape will be kept by the Florin Japanese-American Citizens League and in the University Archives, Sacramento, located at 6000 J Street, Sacramento, California 95819.



## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

She was born Hana Matsumoto on July 1, 1906 in Niigata, Japan to Waicki and Waki Sakai Matsumoto. She lived in Niigata with her mother and brother for about three years. Then her mother, brother, and she went to live in Hiroshima with her paternal grandparents for a very short time. Her mother didn't like it there because the Matsumoto family was very strict. Her uncle in Niigata opened his home to her mother, brother and her, so they went back to Niigata. Hana and her brother lived and were educated there. In the meantime, her mother went back to America to bring her husband back to Japan. He wouldn't go back, and while in America her mother gave birth to her younger sister, Rose. Her mother and younger sister returned to Niigata when her sister was six years old. In 1923, her brother wanted to come to America for three years. As a result, her mother, brother, sister, and she came to the U.S.A. She tried learning English in San Francisco, but she had a difficult time pronouncing the words correctly, so she quit. Instead, she enrolled in sewing school.

On January 26, 1926, she married Kuichi Kodama and settled in Florin. Kuichi Kodama came to America in 1923. He graduated from Kansai Gakuen (a university run by Christian missionaries from Canada), where he participated in swimming and track. His hobby was mountain climbing. After working at Daimaru in Osaka for a year, he decided to come to America and get a graduate degree in economics at USC. One of the missionaries from his school helped him get accepted to USC. He arrived in America during the summer, and while waiting for the semester to start he stayed with his uncle who lived in Florin. His uncle convinced him that it was useless to go to school and that, instead, he should go into farming because one could get rich by being a farmer.

Hana and Kuichi bought land in Florin and farmed grapes and strawberries. In those days Japanese nationals couldn't buy land in California, so they used someone else's name. It was hard work farming the land. They worked many hours everyday of the year. The only entertainment they had to look forward to were the Japanese movies shown at the churches. On movie nights they would quit work early, take baths, and take the whole family to the movies together.

The Kodamas had five children while farming in Florin: Paul Satoru, born 11/12/26, Ted Minoru, 11/29/29, Florence Yoko, 9/13/32, Helen Reiko, 1/31/35, and David Masaru, 12/31/37. Each of them were reared and educated in Florin, until they were later evacuated to Fresno Assembly center, Jerome, Arkansas, and Gila Rivers, Arizona. Their last child, Agnes Junko, was born on July 4, 1943 in Jerome, Arkansas. After the internment, the family returned to California and lived in Walnut Grove for half a year. There, Hana and Kuichi worked in the field and in a cannery. The family then moved to Florin for a year to farm with their former neighbor, but when this relationship didn't work out they moved to Sacramento to work at Hana's brother's restaurant. This didn't work out, either. Hana and Kuichi decided to move to San Francisco so the children could get a good education.



In San Francisco, Hana worked as a dressmaker and later as a repacker for Japan Food Corporation until she retired. Her husband worked as a custodian at a paper company and as a houseworker at private homes. He had his first stroke when he was fifty-four years old. He would soon get better and return to work, but eventually he couldn't work anymore. Kuichi died from a stroke in 1965 at age sixty-six. Hana worked hard until her children were educated. She is proud of her hard work in rearing her children. Now, in her old age, she has traveled and lived a comfortable life.



[Begin Page 1]

TSUKAMOTO: This is September 21st, 1989. I am going to interview Mrs. Hana (Matsumoto) Kodama. At the present time, she lives in San Francisco. We are very happy she came to do this interview with us. Mrs. Kodama, what Ken were you from?

KODAMA: I was from Niigata Ken. I grew up there.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, you are from Niigata. In what year were you born?

KODAMA: 1906.

TSUKAMOTO: What month was it?

KODAMA: Okay, July 1, 1906. Right now, I am 84 years old. No, I am 82 years old.

TSUKAMOTO: 82 years old! Mrs. Wakita was born in 1906, too.

KODAMA: Is that so!

TSUKAMOTO: Same age.

KODAMA: Yes, that is so. We are the same age.

TSUKAMOTO: Okay, will you please talk about Japan?

KODAMA: Uh huh.



TSUKAMOTO: What can you remember?

KODAMA: I went to girls' school (Joo gakko). My mother came back from America when I was 13 years old.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, your mother was in America? Did she leave you and go to America? Were you with your grandmother?

KODAMA: My older brother and I lived with our grandmother. She took care of us. My mother came back because our grandmother died.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, then your mother and father were working in America?

KODAMA: Yes.

TSUKAMOTO: Do you remember where they worked?

KODAMA: No. This is my mother's history. I remember my mother was from Niigata, and got married to her next door neighbor. In Japan, my mother's mother-in-law was a very strict person. In the old days they were very mean. She and her husband went to Tokyo. While they were in Tokyo, they were asked if they would like to go to Hawaii. They agreed to go to Hawaii. In a short time, her husband died in Hawaii, right away.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, yeah. Uh huh.

KODAMA: So in Hawaii, my mother married my father, Mr. Matsumoto.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, yeah. While in Tokyo? Was it in Hawaii?

KODAMA: My mother married my father in Hawaii. Then, they went to Colorado. My older brother was born there.

TSUKAMOTO: Uh huh.

KODAMA: A long time ago, my maternal grandmother said, "It is Japanese custom to marry an approved person, usually from the same Ken. [The marriage in Hawaii wasn't recognized in Japan. Since the marriage wasn't between persons from the same Ken, they had to



receive approval from their parents before their marriage could be recorded in the family registry in Japan and be official.] So, my parents went back to Japan to get permission to be married. While in Japan, I was born. Unless my parents were married officially in Japan, I would have been an illegitimate child, so they asked my maternal grandmother to permit them to get married. She gave her approval.

TSUKAMOTO: Uh huh.

KODAMA: My father was thinking of starting some kind of business in Niigata, but there were communication problems. The language in Niigata was difficult for my father. They talk ho-gen-zuzu way.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh! Where was Mr. Matsumoto from?

KODAMA: Hiroshima Ken.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, Hiroshima. Is there that much of a difference?

KODAMA: Yes, the dialect was too difficult for my father. So, father decided to go back to America alone.

TSUKAMOTO: Mr. Matsumoto?

KODAMA: Yes, so my mother, brother, and I left Niigata to live in Hiroshima. They were a very strict Samurai family. We couldn't live there.

TSUKAMOTO: The Matsumoto family? Your grandfather?

KODAMA: Grandfather Matsumoto was very strict.

KODAMA &

TSUKAMOTO: Ha, ha, ha.

TSUKAMOTO: Meanwhile, our uncle from Niigata came after us. He was willing to take us in and support us. So, we went to live in Niigata.



KODAMA: Father did not come back to Japan, so my mother worried and went back to see him. That was when she got pregnant, and Rose was born in Sacramento.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, that was when Rose was born.

KODAMA: Mother and Rose lived in Walnut Grove until Rose was about six years old while my brother and I lived in Niigata. When Rose was six, my mother and Rose came back to live with us in Niigata.

TSUKAMOTO: Ummm.

KODAMA: My big brother wanted to go to America after he graduated from Chu gakko (Boy's middle school).

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, uh huh. So you had your education in Niigata?

KODAMA: Uh huh. Mother wanted to educate my sister, so she came back to Japan again when Rose was six years old.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh. You received your education in Niigata. Then you came back alone?

KODAMA: No, no. All four of us returned to America.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, your father and mother, too?

KODAMA: No, no. Father stayed in America when my mother and Rose went back to Japan.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, yeah. I see. What kind of work did he do?

KODAMA: He was a farmer.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh! A farmer.

KODAMA: So, four of us came together in a second class berth room on the ship Korea Maru. When we were on the ship, our next door neighbor was Mr. Kushi, uncle to Kuichi Kodama. That is how I got to know him.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, yes, that is how you know Mr. Kushi. What year was it?



KODAMA: That must have been 1923.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh yeah.

KODAMA: Then, for about two or three years, we were friends. They had a daughter.

TSUKAMOTO: What was the name of the ship?

KODAMA: Korea Maru.

TSUKAMOTO: Ko he.

KODAMA: Ko...re...ya.

TSUKAMOTO: Korea Maru ship. Oh, that is why.

KODAMA: That is how I know him.

TSUKAMOTO: They had a daughter?

KODAMA: No, not at that time. She was the same age as me and I met her later that year. [Mr. Kushi's nephew, Kuichi Kodama, was going to go to USC to study and come first class on the ship. He had graduated from Kansai Gakuen and had worked one year at Daimaru in Osaka. He decided to come to America and get a graduate degree in economics. The university he graduated from was run by Christian missionaries from Canada. One of them got him accepted to U.S.C.]

TSUKAMOTO: Do you mean, Kuichi Kodama?

KODAMA: He came with high hopes and looked forward to study at U.S.C. [Kuichi came to America during the summer of 1923. While waiting for the semester to start, he stayed with his uncle, Mr. Kushi.] At that time, Uncle told him, "Even if you go to school, you will not become rich. It is better to farm. I will buy you land to farm." That was absurd. Ha ha ha. That was also what



happened. I got married after two years here, so it was the third year.

TSUKAMOTO: You got married three years after arriving here? You waited that long?

KODAMA: Actually, it was just over two years. [In the meantime, I quit English School and instead went to sewing school in San Francisco.] I talked to Mr. Kushi (Baishkunin), the go-between. Kuichi and I both came here to study, so I asked if it was all right for me to go to school after marriage. That was an absurd and ignorant thing to say.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.

KODAMA: I didn't even know how to cook. We had to hire some older Japanese to help operate the farm. They made fun of my lack of know-how. I didn't know anything. I didn't even know how to make tsukemono (pickled vegetables). I did know how to salt the fish.

TSUKAMOTO: Then, you didn't cook in Japan.

KODAMA: No, I learned how to make sushi, and other things in school, but I never tried. We had servants who did all the cooking in Japan. I had a cookbook, but it was different here.

TSUKAMOTO: Yes, you really have to know. Was it different? It was country-style cooking. Wait just a minute.

KODAMA: Yes.

TSUKAMOTO: Could you hear? Kind of low, isn't it?

KODAMA: Yes, I could hear.

TSUKAMOTO: Then, you married three years later? Was it 1923? Then, in 1926?

KODAMA: Yes, in 1926.



TSUKAMOTO: Then, Mr. Kushi said, "He will buy a farm for you?"

KODAMA: Yes, he said that. He told Kodama to farm on this land. Kodama never said "no." He always agreed to the proposal.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.

KODAMA: Kodama never disagreed, he always said, "Hai, hai" (yes, yes).

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, yeah.

KODAMA: Both of us were ignorant. We didn't know anything about farming. So, for about three years, Kodama had bloody noses while he worked on the farm.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.

KODAMA: As the children were born, we both worked very hard. We had the desire to make this work.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, this is a kind of work you are not used to doing.

KODAMA: So, after we picked strawberries, we had to lay down to rest.

TSUKAMOTO: You both worked very hard. What was Mr. Kodama's first name?

KODAMA: Kuichi.

TSUKAMOTO: Kuichi. Okay, you both lost the chance to study.

KODAMA: Uh huh.

TSUKAMOTO: Grandmother used to say you really wanted to go to school.

KODAMA: We did want to go to school. That was the reason we came.

TSUKAMOTO: You didn't have a chance to go to school?

KODAMA: Uh huh. When we had any spare time, we went to San Francisco to study. My parents became angry. They didn't think they sent their daughter to America to work on the farm. But I felt shi ka ta ga nai (can't be helped).

TSUKAMOTO: Uh huh, yeah.



KODAMA: We were all poor. Mr. Kushi was having some financial problems, too, so we had to buy the land ourselves. [We couldn't buy land as we were Japanese nationals, so we had to use someone else's name.]

TSUKAMOTO: Yes, these were hardships. Did you pay off the mortgage before you went to camp?

KODAMA: No, we did not pay off our mortgage, so we lost our farm.

TSUKAMOTO: Many people had the same problems. During the depression, everyone was having the same problem. Everyone was in debt.

KODAMA: Yes, it was that way.

TSUKAMOTO: Everyone who bought land had the same problems. We had the same problem.

KODAMA: After our internment at Fresno Assembly, Jerome, Arkansas, and Gila, Arizona, we came back and there was nothing there.

TSUKAMOTO: Yes.

KODAMA: My brother lived in Walnut Grove, so we went there. I worked at a cannery.

TSUKAMOTO: You went to a cannery?

KODAMA: Yes, I had to work.

TSUKAMOTO: Which cannery did you work at? Was it Del Monte?

KODAMA: No, that was in Walnut Grove. The cannery was canning asparagus. I worked at anything to make a living.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh.

KODAMA: I had to work doing almost anything or else we would have starved. We had so many children and they were small. I had to work to put food on the table. After that, our old neighbor from Florin came to



ask us to farm with him. I think we worked hard for about a year, but our partnership was not successful. We felt cheated.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, gee.

KODAMA: So, we went back to Sacramento. My brother was operating a restaurant there. He asked us to work with him, but it was not an agreeable kind of work for us.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, a restaurant! Your brother was operating a restaurant in Walnut Grove?

KODAMA: No, this was in Sacramento, after World War II. It was on K Street. [Before the evacuation, it was in Walnut Grove.] I went to see, but I couldn't handle the crowds. There were many farm workers that came to the restaurant. It was like war. I couldn't handle that kind of job. We had to send our children to school, so we decided to go to San Francisco.

TSUKAMOTO: This must have been after the war.

KODAMA: Yes, it was after the war.

TSUKAMOTO: So, that was the reason you went to San Francisco.

KODAMA: Yes, yes.

TSUKAMOTO: At your brother's restaurant in Sacramento, how long did you work?

KODAMA: It was either one month or two months. Oh, I told him we just couldn't work there. I had to stand and take orders.

TSUKAMOTO: Uh huh. Your children were small yet.

KODAMA: They were attending school. I felt sorry for my children because we had to move so often, and there were many difficult times.

TSUKAMOTO: It must have been difficult for you all. You couldn't go back?

KODAMA: We couldn't go back. They had taken the property from us.



TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, many people lost their farms so they couldn't go back.

KODAMA: Shi ka ta ga nai desu (This couldn't be helped). So, I thought I had to do something else to work. That is how I felt. After that, we went to San Francisco. I worked really hard. I did some dressmaking, and worked for 24 years for Japan Food Corporation. Four or five years after moving to San Francisco, my husband had a stroke.

TSUKAMOTO: You?

KODAMA: No, Kodama. He was fifty-four years old.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, fifty-four years old! What was Mr. Kodama doing for work?

KODAMA: He was doing office and house cleaning. He didn't know how so someone taught him. It must have been hard work for him.

TSUKAMOTO: Um (telephone rang). Excuse me. These kind of stories should be made known to everyone so the record could be kept. The State University wants us to tell our stories. We never dreamed this could happen. This is a good chance to tell our stories.

KODAMA: Yes.

TSUKAMOTO: I am praying that my feet will be able to keep me going and will be able to communicate and be able to finish this project.

KODAMA: Yes, I agree.

TSUKAMOTO: I am listening. I do worry for the future of our generation and later ones. This country is founded on democracy, but you can't tell how the future will be. This country has too much freedom.

KODAMA: Yes, I think so.

TSUKAMOTO: So, we are too free. We must find the right person to lead us.

KODAMA: Yes, right now. It is hard to tell who will be good.



TSUKAMOTO: In democracy, the situation right now is the enemy of democracy. This kind of situation exists now. So, we should all become strong. Otherwise, we will face bankruptcy. Many people were unable to relate to what we went through. They ask, did this really happen?

KODAMA: Oh.

TSUKAMOTO: This is the reason the State University of Sacramento came to us to tell our stories. So, I do hope everyone is willing to their stories-- about how you worked with honesty and hardship.

KODAMA: Oh.

TSUKAMOTO: This is why I want everyone to know your story. They want to know.

KODAMA: We really did go through a lot. Before the war we were treated badly.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah. I just had a telephone call. Let us talk about it later.

KODAMA: Yes, yes.

TSUKAMOTO: After you went to San Francisco, he was fifty-four years old and he had a stroke?

KODAMA: It was just a little before he became fifty-four. At that time, the youngest child was really small yet.

TSUKAMOTO: How old was she?

KODAMA: Let me see, Junko was about ten years old.

TSUKAMOTO: How many children were there?

KODAMA: Six children.

TSUKAMOTO: Who is the eldest?

KODAMA: Paul

TSUKAMOTO: How old was he?



KODAMA: He was about twenty-six years old. Right now, Paul is sixty-three years old.

TSUKAMOTO: He is sixty-three years old now?

KODAMA: Yes, sixty-three years old.

TSUKAMOTO: Do you remember what year it was he got sick?

KODAMA: Let's see, it was twenty-four years ago when he died.

TSUKAMOTO: He died twenty-four years ago.

KODAMA: He died thirteen years after his first stroke.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh. Then he must have died in 1965. Our grandfather died in 1964, one year earlier. Then, he was a stroke patient for thirteen years.

KODAMA: So, he couldn't work.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, it must have been 1952. Then it must have been right after he came back from camp.

KODAMA: Yes, it was about that time, a little while after we came back. After we went to San Francisco, he worked a little while and then he was unable to work.

TSUKAMOTO: If Florence was sixty-three.

KODAMA: No, not Florence. Paul is sixty-three years old. He is the oldest son.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, Paul is sixty-three then.

KODAMA: Uh huh. Paul was attending school when his father had the stroke, so Paul must have been about twenty-four or twenty-five. I am not sure.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, twenty-six years old.

KODAMA: After the war ended, he served his war duty and attended school in



Los Angeles. It was an electrical engineering vocational school.  
After graduating, he worked in Hawaii for five years, then returned to the mainland.

TSUKAMOTO: What school was it in Los Angeles?

KODAMA: What was it? I think it was a vocational school. Electronics.

TSUKAMOTO: Then, electrical engineering.

KODAMA: He worked in Hawaii for five years.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh? Al, do you know the name of the electrical engineering school in Los Angeles? Poly Tech?

KODAMA: I don't know for sure.

TSUKAMOTO: Okay, then he worked five years in Hawaii.

KODAMA: The company changed its name by merger, so I don't know it.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, I see. Right now, is he working in San Francisco?

KODAMA: No, no, no. Near San Francisco, not far from here. A little farther down.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, I see. Uh hum.

KODAMA: They are all doing some kind of work.

TSUKAMOTO: Then, your other son?

KODAMA: Ted, my second son. After Junior College, he went to San Francisco Golden Gate College for accounting, but he didn't finish. He said he was going to Los Angeles for school, but he didn't finish. He was very smart, but he didn't finish. He went from one school to another. He changed too many times.

TSUKAMOTO: Is he doing a fulfilling kind of work?

KODAMA: Yes, he is doing all right.

TSUKAMOTO: That is good. Your youngest son's age?



KODAMA: David is 51 years old. He has been working for the government at the Food and Drug Administration for twenty-five years.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, uh huh.

KODAMA: He graduated from San Jose State College and majored in chemistry.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh. Then he graduated.

KODAMA: Yoko and Junko graduated from U.C. Berkeley. My second daughter, Reiko, didn't like school, but she did graduate from San Francisco Junior College. They all went to the school of their choice. I have no regrets.

TSUKAMOTO: Did they work and go to school? Or did you send them to school?

KODAMA: We (my husband and I) used to talk about how going to school on their own was too much for students. We sent them, but I had a lot of help from my sister, Rose.

TSUKAMOTO: It must have been difficult for you, but you were lucky to have a helping hand from your sister, Rose.

KODAMA: They all went to college, so I have no worries. Kodama died when my youngest daughter had one year left before graduation from U.C. So, I think he was satisfied.

TSUKAMOTO: What was the name of your youngest child.

KODAMA: Agnes or Aggie, but I call her Junko. She had one more year to go to finish when her father died. So, I think he was satisfied. All the children had education. I sent them all to their schools of choice, so I am satisfied. I sure had to work hard for this. The brothers and sisters all helped each other.

TSUKAMOTO: Mr. Kodama and you had given up your ambition to be educated,



but you really did your job well. All six of your children received a good education. That was a big job.

KODAMA: I had no choice. I sent them to the school of their choice so I feel relieved. When they graduated from school, it was up to them.

TSUKAMOTO: Is Paul an electrical engineer?

KODAMA: No, he is not an electrical engineer. He has no degree.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh.

KODAMA: The school was a specialized electronics school so there was no degree.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, I see. Uh huh.

KODAMA: He did learn about electronics.

TSUKAMOTO: Then he is an electronics specialist.

KODAMA: Yes, he is a specialist.

TSUKAMOTO: Next one?

KODAMA: An accountant.

TSUKAMOTO: What was his name?

KODAMA: Ted.

TSUKAMOTO: Ted, okay. Accountant. Who is next?

KODAMA: David is a chemist.

TSUKAMOTO: David, chemical. Food and Drug Administration.

KODAMA: Uh huh. Los Angeles.

TSUKAMOTO: Was David the last boy?

KODAMA: Yes. After him comes Junko.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, is it Junko?

KODAMA: Uh huh. There is still Yoko and Reiko.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, uh huh. David is in chemistry, and he is working for the Federal Food and Drug Administration.



KODAMA: Uh huh. Government work in Los Angeles.

TSUKAMOTO: Junko, what did she specialize in?

KODAMA: Medical technologist. Yoko (Florence).

TSUKAMOTO: Not Junko, Yoko?

KODAMA: Yes, what did Junko do? I think criminology.

TSUKAMOTO: Huh?

KODAMA: Her work is about crime. Criminology.

TSUKAMOTO: Huh? Cosmetology?

KODAMA: Criminology. Has to do with crime, like police work. In Japan, it is called Hanzai goku.

TSUKAMOTO: What kind of work?

KODAMA: Something like policeman's work.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh! Criminology.

KODAMA: My pronunciation is not good.

TSUKAMOTO: Criminology, oh yes.

KODAMA: She didn't like criminology, so she changed to computers.

TSUKAMOTO: Everyone likes computers because they are new and good.

KODAMA: So, she is doing computer work now.

TSUKAMOTO: Your children are Paul, David, Ted, Junko, Yoko, and Reiko.

KODAMA: Reiko didn't like school, so she only went to Junior College.

TSUKAMOTO: All these are really big jobs, educating all these children.

KODAMA: I didn't ask for any help, but I was lucky I had a brother and sister like Rose. They helped me, and I am thankful to them.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, Rose doesn't have any children, so she must appreciate helping your children.

KODAMA: The house I live in now is in San Francisco. Thirty years ago, Rose



bought it with her money, and I gave her monthly payments until I paid it all back.

TSUKAMOTO: Thirty years ago you bought? Rose bought? Oh, my!

KODAMA: She paid \$18,000. Now, it is worth \$250,000 to \$350,000. Maybe the location is good. It's a small two bedroom house.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, oh. One bedroom?

KODAMA: Two bedrooms.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, oh, oh. My daughter Marielle is living in San Jose. Her property value went up.

KODAMA: My second daughter Reiko bought a house in Millbrae about twenty-four years ago for \$45,000. Now, it is worth a half a million dollars. They don't have many children around the area. At that time, I thought the house was expensive. It is a big house with four bedrooms. It is located in a good area.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, gee!

KODAMA: Nowadays, Japanese business people live near there.

TSUKAMOTO: When there is demand, the price goes up.

KODAMA: About fourteen or fifteen years ago, or maybe seventeen years ago, our son David moved to a new house in the Los Angeles area. When he bought that house it was \$80,000. Now, it's worth \$200,000.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, new house.

KODAMA: They are getting along alright.

TSUKAMOTO: You gave them education, which will help them get ahead. Work hard and it will pay. When you were going through all the hardships, there must have been days you and your husband must have cried. But now it is paying off.



KODAMA: I am thankful, but I feel sorry for my husband.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.

KODAMA: He worked hard, was an invalid and died. He didn't have a chance to attend school. I feel sorry for him. He didn't get to travel anywhere while I was able to travel to many places after he passed away.

TSUKAMOTO: While your husband was sick, you worked hard to support the family?

KODAMA: I had to work. I had to support the family.

TSUKAMOTO: You worked hard for thirteen years. Your husband Kuichi must have felt helpless, not able to work himself.

KODAMA: Yes, he always said, "I am sorry you had to work in my place." I told him, "God knows all about us. One of us is healthy and is able to work. He helped us by letting me be able to work."

TSUKAMOTO: You have faith, so you are able to talk to him that way.

KODAMA: Uh huh. Nowadays, I am getting old, so for me God comes first. I put everything in his care, so I don't have to worry. I tell my grandchildren not to tell lies. Be honest and believe in God. Walk straight. Grandma is happy now.

TSUKAMOTO: How many grandchildren do you have?

KODAMA: I have seven grandchildren. Yoko's two girls finished schooling. Reiko's third child is attending school. They have three boys in their family. Right now, the youngest son is studying...he is studying at U.C. Berkeley, majoring in Electrical Engineering. He is either in his third or fourth year. I think fourth year.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.

KODAMA: The one above him doesn't like school.



TSUKAMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KODAMA: David has two daughters. The older daughter is attending UC San Diego. She studied Japanese for one year. It was hard for her. She is now in her second year of school.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, yeah. It is good that you are here to see what is happening to your grandchildren. It is great for you to know your grandchildren's accomplishments. Florence's (Yoko) daughter did so well in school.

KODAMA: Yoko's daughter, I think, should have been born a boy. She is very smart. She had a straight A record in all of her studies. She went to Sacramento State University. For her master's degree, she went to Tuscon, Arizona. That is a different state so they charged \$3000 tuition, but the government and university gave her scholarship because she is an A student.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, yeah.

KODAMA: She was getting straight A report cards. In about seven months she could have graduated.

TSUKAMOTO: What is her name?

KODAMA: Lu Ann.

TSUKAMOTO: Huh?

KODAMA: Lu Ann

TSUKAMOTO: Lu Ann.

KODAMA: She is a very capable person. She went to UC Summer School to learn Japanese because she wanted to go to Japan. They teach in two months what it takes others a whole year to learn. She learned in two and a half months. She is on the go, go. She does everything. She doesn't like to waste time. She got married and



moved to Sapporo, Japan. She taught English there to college students. In Japan, after they pass their entrance examination, they don't study much.

TSUKAMOTO: Yes, I heard about that. But that doesn't make much sense, it's funny. He, he, he.

KODAMA: It is funny that way.

TSUKAMOTO: I guess they passed their entrance examination, so they slack off with their studies. I guess they feel secure, now. Ha, ha, ha.

KODAMA: So, Lu Ann gave home work to the students but they didn't like to do the work.

TSUKAMOTO: Uh huh.

KODAMA: She kept giving them homework. When they got called, they always apologized. Other teachers told her to stop trying. She told them if she really tried, it will work. After a while, her efforts paid off.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh.

KODAMA: She never gives up, she is rather pushy.

TSUKAMOTO: Umm.

KODAMA: She is in Brazil now. She learned Portugese. She even hired a tutor to learn the language. They have already purchased an automobile over there.

TSUKAMOTO: Is it in Japan?

KODAMA: No, in Brazil.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, Brazil.

KODAMA: Right now, she is teaching English. Even if you don't push, they come to you to learn English.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.



KODAMA: Even the company people come to ask her to teach English.

TSUKAMOTO: By the way, what is Lu Ann's husband's name?

KODAMA: Ogawa. O ga wa.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, he is working in the bank?

KODAMA: Yes.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, ha ha. Yoko has other children?

KODAMA: Yes, one other. Teri graduated from the Art Center in Pasadena and is working in Animation.

End of A



TSUKAMOTO: Issei people came here and faced discrimination, but they worked hard. That was a sad case.

KODAMA: Yes, we did work hard. We endured and we worked hard.

TSUKAMOTO: That was a hardship on the Issei.

KODAMA: We do wonder--we were able to endure, but how will the third generation do? Or the later generations?

TSUKAMOTO: That is the reason we want to find out about your experience and leave behind what you went through in your lifetime here in the USA. We want you to leave your good work as a good example for the future generations.

KODAMA: Issei did go through a lot. We do want them to know.

TSUKAMOTO: I still remember those days when you used to wear a bonnet all dirty from being touched by hands that worked hard. It was hot and hard work. Everybody worked. When we went around asking for donations, Issei people used to come out of strawberry patches like that, and give us donations.

KODAMA: Uh huh. During the summer months when there were movies shown at the Buddhist church or the Christian church, we used to quit our work early and attend the movies. We looked forward to it.

TSUKAMOTO: Everyone used to take cushions and blankets and save spaces for others.

KODAMA: It was like that, but now, the third generation is much more blessed.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, yeah. Nowadays, everyone lives a more comfortable life, but when something comes up, they may not be strong.

KODAMA: They are fortunate, but in case they have to face hardship, will they



be able to make it through? We made it through, but will they be able to? We were able to face anything.

TSUKAMOTO: But, I am surprised at what these third or fourth generations can do. I am pleased at what they can do.

KODAMA: Yes, I am impressed with these young people helping at Kimochi Kai (elderly people's luncheon). Do you call it Kanshin (impressive)?

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah. So they must feel the examples set by their parents and grandparents. It was not a waste.

KODAMA: Yes, of course, some impressions must be with them.

TSUKAMOTO: They live in an age of better living conditions, so they are "soft," but when you take a good look at them, you will be surprised to know what they can do.

KODAMA: Yes, that is right, even we feel they are doing great things. Yes, yes, they are doing great things. Yes, yes, I agree.

TSUKAMOTO: Everyone has money and is taking life easier, but don't worry. Like your granddaughter, Lu Ann, some will do great things.

KODAMA: Yes, yes, I agree. Even when she didn't know anything about the Japanese language, she made an effort and did learn. That is different and commendable.

TSUKAMOTO: Kuichi-san must be in heaven, smiling about his surviving family.

KODAMA: I think so. We didn't urge, but they do learn the Japanese language. I do believe God and Kodama is watching over us.

TSUKAMOTO: Yes, uh huh.

KODAMA: That is the reason I am very happy to be blessed with a secure feeling. So, I feel thankful. My feelings come out of my mouth naturally. So I say "thanks" many times a day.



TSUKAMOTO: Yeah. Yes, it is thankful.

KODAMA: When I wake up, I feel good. I feel so thankful. I say that many times a day.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, that's why you've lived a long time. I do believe that. Even when you are sick, the people with faith will recover. Even doctors' medicine works better for them. If you don't like medicine, it will turn against you.

KODAMA: I agree. I was told to take things in positive ways. I have tried to kind to others. That is why I am happy.

TSUKAMOTO: If you have a negative attitude, it will poison your system.

KODAMA: That is right. I am 83 years old. My family and friends are happy for me. My granddaughter always says "Grandma always takes things in a good way. It is good." I feel that is a positive way to make everyone happy.

TSUKAMOTO: One of these days, we will not be able to do anything. At the time we taped Mr. Abe, he was still active, working in the grape and strawberry patch, and other works, until lately. Now, he has problems with his legs. The other day, Al went to see him, but he was saying he wants to die.

KODAMA: Uh huh.

TSUKAMOTO: When we taped his story, he was well and very happy. We will all have to face death some day. When you lose use of your hands and feet, still we should be thankful. If we have enough strength left, we should still encourage others and be thankful to God.

KODAMA: Uh huh. Uh huh. That is true.

TSUKAMOTO: When you read what the elders wrote, there are many fine (rippa) stories written by them.



KODAMA: Uh huh, Uh huh. Yes, yes.

TSUKAMOTO: Let us persist (gan baru) to the end.

KODAMA: When we go, God will be with us.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.

KODAMA: I tell my doctor, I am not afraid of death.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah. It is like going to another room.

KODAMA: I think it is like going to sleep.

TSUKAMOTO: That is why you are blessed.

KODAMA: Yes. I am blessed. I am thankful.

TSUKAMOTO: I feel sorry for those who are afraid.

KODAMA: Yes (Kawaii so). I feel sorry for them. I am not afraid of death, so when I hear people say I shouldn't eat this or that, I tell them I said, "I eat anything" to my doctor. He said, "That is good." I do write to others that I am blessed and happy at my age.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah. That is good.

KODAMA: My children know what I went through, so they come to see me often. Kodama used to say, "It is no use telling children what not to do, instead show good examples and they will learn from that."

TSUKAMOTO: But you will have to tell them some things. Someone may not know, so you will have to talk, too.

KODAMA: I do talk to them, too.

TSUKAMOTO: That is good.

KODAMA: Uh huh. I do tell them, too.

TSUKAMOTO: So, this will be left for them to know more about your past experiences.

KODAMA: Yes. In my opinion, we must always be "thankful." When I am asked what is the most important thing in our life, I will say "love."



TSUKAMOTO: Yeah, yeah. Uh huh.

KODAMA: We must be thankful to "God's love."

TSUKAMOTO: Yes.

KODAMA: If you feel happy, that is the utmost for anyone to achieve one's goal, there could not be anything above that.

TSUKAMOTO: That is true.

KODAMA: Some people are always complaining. I feel they are foolish.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah. In San Francisco, do you go to Kimochi Kai?

KODAMA: No, I don't go, but I listen to television on Sunday night about religion. I do believe in God. I don't attend church now, but I still beleive. I do pledge to church--that is all I can do.

TSUKAMOTO: Uh huh.

KODAMA: Even if I wanted to go to the church, I have to get a transfer to reach the church. I am getting older, so I don't go.

TSUKAMOTO: Your church is not near you?

KODAMA: Kind of far. Still, I do believe in God. It might be better to attend and sing Sanbika (Hymm) with others.

TSUKAMOTO: If you go and see your friends.

KODAMA: I do meet my friends and go out to lunch together. They are church members.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, I see. That is good. Where is your church?

KODAMA: Methodist (Pine Methodist). But now, it is not on Pine Street. They moved. Nowadays, there are less Issei attending church.

TSUKAMOTO: Yes, it is the same all over the place.

KODAMA: That is the same in Sacramento, too I don't see any Issei I used to know. The minister changed, too.

TSUKAMOTO: Even if all the people you used to know are not around, you should



make new friends.

KODAMA: Right now, I do know some Nisei who speak Japanese. They don't know Japan, but they are elders so I get along with them. I also know Mrs. Oyama. Do you know her?

TSUKAMOTO: Who?

KODAMA: Ruby Oyama.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh! Ruby Oyama. One of the Ishikawa family. Do you see her?

KODAMA: She attends church sometimes. She is not well. She can't tell when she will have a backache. We do go to lunch together. She has a sister whose name is Mary, and she has Alzheimer's disease.

TSUKAMOTO: She has that sickness. I feel sorry for her. Alzheimer's disease was not known before. I wonder when it started.

KODAMA: There are two Togazaki sisters with the same sickness. They were sharp before, but now they are Alzheimer's victims too.

TSUKAMOTO: Anyone could get that sickness. I feel sorry for Mary Ishikawa. Let's see. I heard some food will prevent this illness from happening. I think I heard it was Nigauri (Bitter melon).

KODAMA: Oh! Nigauri.

TSUKAMOTO: That is good. So, we should all eat bitter melon before we get that way.

KODAMA: Oh! Bitter melon. It is hard for us to eat that bitter food.

TSUKAMOTO: But Fumi Okamoto said, "it tastes good." She talked about it with other food.

KODAMA: To prevent absent-mindedness, I watch the news on T.V. day and night. I also read books to keep me sharp. Ha, ha, ha.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.

KODAMA: I am at that age, too. If that happens, it will really be hard on



others, too.

TSUKAMOTO: You know Mrs. Oyama, then, do you know Katherine (Sasaki) Nunotani?

KODAMA: Yes. Mr. and Mrs. Nunotani really help others. They help in many ways.

TSUKAMOTO: I heard the people say that the ones that come from Inaka (country) usually do help others.

KODAMA: When I first went to San Francisco, I felt the people over there were cold. Country folks are kindhearted.

TSUKAMOTO: Yeah. When asked to make sushi, Katherine told me that if they are from the country, they will do it willingly.

KODAMA: Uh huh.

TSUKAMOTO: Katherine works hard. She sure moves around a lot.

KODAMA: Yes. She goes from one place to another place. She helps all over the place, and because people like her are around, the community is surviving.

TSUKAMOTO: Yes, that is true.

KODAMA: I say, if I could speak English, I could volunteer, but I don't. My pronunciation is poor, so I can't do much.

TSUKAMOTO: Still, you do know some, don't you?

KODAMA: If I speak English, it won't get through. My grandchildren say they cannot understand Grandma's English.

TSUKAMOTO: He, he, ha, ha, ha.

KODAMA: I shouldn't have learned the way Japanese speak in Japan. That worked against me. My pronunciation is not good. I didn't think I could stay this long in America. I came here to study for only three years.



TSUKAMOTO: Yeah.

KODAMA: Before the war, we still had hoped to go back to Japan.

TSUKAMOTO: You did want to go back?

KODAMA: Yes, I did. We used to discuss what we would do in Japan when we went back. Kodama used to like to read and study.

TSUKAMOTO: You both liked to go to school, but you did give an education to your children.

KODAMA: Yes, somehow we managed. I felt we gave an education to the ones who liked to get educated. For those who didn't like, we didn't push, so I am satisfied.

TSUKAMOTO: That is good, you are really a blessed person.

KODAMA: I don't feel I deprived them of anything. I did everything possible for them.

TSUKAMOTO: That is good.

KODAMA: The ones who wanted an education got it. Those who didn't like school didn't attend.

TSUKAMOTO: It was good, you are really blessed in many ways.

KODAMA: Yes, I do feel the way you said.

TSUKAMOTO: It was good. Mr. Abe used to say that he regretted that he didn't study English.

KODAMA: We were just staying for three years. I didn't think we would stay this long.

TSUKAMOTO: It would have been nice to be able to talk to your grandchildren in English. There will be someone who will translate your experiences into English. You could leave this for your grandchildren and great grandchildren. That was good. Let us end this conversation now.

KODAMA: Thank you.



# TABLE OF CHILDREN (FOR REFERENCE)

(1) Paul Satoru Kodama	11/12/26
(2) Ted Minoru Kodama	11/22/29
(3) Florence Yoko Shikasko	9/13/32
(G) Lu Ann Michiko Ogawa	9/20/60
(GG) Viviana Ogawa	5/30/91
(G) Teri (Hanako) Shikasko	8/14/63
(4) Helen Reiko Vigil	1/31/35
(G) Randy Vigil	11/22/55
(G) Ricky Vigil	9/28/63
(G) Rodney Vigil	2/26/68
(5) David Masaru Kodama	12/31/37
(G) Denise Michiko Kodama	5/1/70
(G) Deanna Akiko Kodama	5/24/75
(6) Agnes Junko Lau	7/4/43
(G) - Grandchild	
(GG) - Great-grandchild	